

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace paragraph starting at page 6, line 7 with the following amended paragraph:

The proximal portion 14 of elongate member 12 can have a variety of configurations, but it preferably includes a handle 22 formed thereon or mated thereto. The handle 22 can have virtually any shape and size, and it can optionally include a gripping surface 24, such as a knurled surface, ridges, or grooves, to further facilitate grasping of the device 10. In an alternative embodiment, or in addition to the handle 22, the proximal portion 14 of the elongate member 12 can include a clamp member (not shown) formed thereon or mated thereto that is effective to mate the device 10 to a surgical retractor, such as, for example a Bookwalter retractor. Alternatively, the surgical retractor can contain a post or surface for attaching to a Bookwalter retractor having a clamp. A person skilled in the art will appreciate that a variety of clamp members and/or other mating techniques can be used to mate the device 10 to a retractor or other type of support member.

Please replace paragraph starting at page 10, line 3 with the following amended paragraph:

With the distal portion of device 10 mated to and aligned with the spinal plate 80, the handle 22 can be used to retract tissue around the implant site, and to position the plate against adjacent vertebrae. The handle can then either be held in position, or attached to an external support structure, such as a Bookwalter retractor, using a clamp disposed on the handle or on the external support, to maintain the position of the spinal plate against the vertebrae.